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DATELINE LANGLEY: FIXING THE INTELLIGENCE MESS

by Allan E. Goodman

The recent campaign for the White House marked the third straight presidential election in which the American intelligence community's performance was a major issue. From their memoirs it is clear that Presidents Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski all left office thinking intelligence had not served them well. Moreover, ever since the debacle in Iran the Senate and House select committees on intelligence have been sharply critical of the substantive briefings they have received from the intelligence agencies.

As early as 1981, the Reagan administration's disappointment was underscored by Admiral Bobby Inman, the country's most senior and respected career military intelligence officer and deputy director of central intelligence until 1982. Inman told several audiences that the U.S. intelligence community's performance was at its lowest level since Pearl Harbor. And in the wake of the most recent bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, President Ronald Reagan himself expressed concern about "the near destruction of our intelligence capability," which presidential spokesman Larry Speakes blamed on "a decade-long trend of a climate in Congress that resulted in inadequate funding and support for intelligence gathering capabilities."

Intelligence and foreign-policy professionals should take such criticism seriously, despite the political circumstances and motives that may have generated it. Many intelligence operatives have left the profession wondering if the community has become too fragmented.

ALLAN E. GOODMAN *is associate dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. From 1975 to 1980, he served in several senior staff positions in the Central Intelligence Agency, including presidential briefing coordinator for the director of central intelligence.*

Sophisticated collection technologies have actually impeded the sharing of information. And rival agencies in stiff competition for funding prepare such divergent analyses that the system fails to provide enough accurate, timely, or complete information to policymakers. Unfortunately, such problems have plagued the intelligence community for more than a decade and are so deeply rooted that only fundamental change in the system will improve performance.

The intelligence community comprises the agencies and organizations specifically authorized by the National Security Act of 1947 and subsequent executive orders to conduct intelligence activities "necessary for the conduct of foreign relations and the protection of the National Security of the United States." The current members of the community all fall within the executive branch and report to the director of central intelligence (DCI), the National Security Council (NSC), and the president—in that order. The community includes the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), the military service and special collection offices in the Pentagon, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Treasury Department's Office of Intelligence Support, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and a unit of the Department of Energy. The CIA, however, is the only agency controlled directly by the DCI.

Intelligence activities revolve around four functions. The first, intelligence gathering, includes human intelligence (HUMINT), photography, and the processing of electronic and communications signals (ELINT and COMINT). The second and third functions involve analyzing information and getting the results to those who need them. The fourth function is covert action. While controversial, it represents only a minor part of intelligence activities and despite controversy and mistakes is generally better managed than either the collection or the analytic functions. Thus a central concern is whether information collected in the field is properly analyzed and reaches the right people in a usable form.

What policymakers expect and need from

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the intelligence community are timely facts and insightful analyses that improve their ability to understand issues. Such analyses come in four basic forms. First is the current intelligence report, produced usually within hours of an event, to inform policymakers about current developments and to give estimates of how these developments will affect the situation in the near term. The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) is a longer and more in-depth look at a specific international situation that presents judgments on future developments and what they portend for the United States. NIEs represent the judgments of all agencies in the intelligence community. Intelligence assessments are virtually identical to NIEs except that they are produced entirely by one agency and are not coordinated within the community. Finally, intelligence memoranda are reports of basic research on complex scientific, technological, economic, sociocultural, political, geographic, or biographical issues.

Placing the Blame

The quality of the intelligence provided by the community has been seriously questioned for some time. There have been at least 30 alleged intelligence failures investigated by Congress or by the press since 1960. Since the White House has not permitted the DCI to release an unclassified version of the CIA annual report, the number of successes is not known and therefore it is impossible to compute a track record. But it is not reassuring that the failures show patterns and that many of them involved issues and threats of major strategic, diplomatic, or economic importance to the United States.

American intelligence has frequently misjudged Soviet behavior and capabilities—targets of highest priority. U.S. intelligence erred, for example, about the Soviet threat to American U-2 reconnaissance flights in 1960. It failed to predict Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's deployment of offensive missiles in Cuba in 1962; the successors to Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and Yuri Andropov; the level of Soviet defense spending; and Soviet industry's ability to design and produce a nuclear arsenal of 1,000 missiles with accuracies comparable to America's in 5 years. The intelligence community also bungled the question of the origins and intentions of the Soviet combat brigade "discovered" in Cuba in 1979. Such misjudgments have all been extremely costly to U.S. security. Some of these failures led to major crises, like the Cuban missile crisis; others, such as the underestimate of the Soviet nuclear build-up, led to complacency about America's own arsenal and the need to modernize it.

U.S. intelligence agencies also have failed to anticipate military attacks and to identify tactics and targets in limited wars. The intelligence community has rarely predicted correctly the use of force by one state to achieve its aims over another. The failures include the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950; the risk to the USS *Liberty* of Israeli air attack if the ship continued a surveillance mission during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war; the risk to the USS *Pueblo* of its surveillance activities near North Korean waters in 1968; the objective of the Tet offensive in Vietnam in 1968; the 1973 Arab-Israeli war; the Argentine seizure of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) and the subsequent British sinking of the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano*; and the efforts by Iran and Iraq to destroy each other's oil fields and export facilities once the Persian Gulf war broke out.

Even when there were indications that a military attack was planned, these findings failed to make their way up the chain of command or were dismissed because they contradicted prevailing intelligence community judgments. The intelligence community tends to underestimate the willingness of antagonists to fight rather than negotiate, as if it projects on to other countries America's own desire either to avoid using force or to limit combat.

The record is also poor in protecting America's economic and geostrategic interests in the Third World. The OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) revolution was not predicted, nor was the overthrow of King Idris of Libya in 1969 by Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi or the fall of Shah Mohammed

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Riza Pahlevi of Iran and his replacement by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. More recently, the official Defense Department inquiry into the October 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut concluded that "the U.S. . . . commander did not have effective U.S. human intelligence support."

In each of these cases, ill-conceived or mistaken policy also was at fault. But to blame the policymaker for the failure, as many intelligence professionals have done, would be a serious mistake. However the policymakers reached their conclusions, they were guided by faulty intelligence analysis or poorly served by the slow or incomplete dissemination of reports by the intelligence community.

The most hotly debated intelligence failure of the 1970s was the Iran debacle. Actually, a series of failures along with a vacillating policy toward the shah led to the seizure of the U.S. embassy in November 1979 and destroyed vital American economic and security interests in the region. To be sure, as the consultants who compiled the CIA's postmortem on Iran later discovered, not a single person in or out of government forecast the ascent of Khomeini. Revolutions have rarely been predicted correctly, but U.S. intelligence agencies and their analyses failed even to come close.

The findings of the Iran postmortem . . . were so embarrassing that no more than a dozen persons were permitted to see the report.

The episode caused Carter to send the following hand-written note to then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Brzezinski, and then Director of Central Intelligence Admiral Stansfield Turner: "To Cy, Zbig, Stan—I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence. Assess our assets and, as soon as possible, give me a report concerning our abilities in the most important areas of the world. Make a joint recommendation on what we should do to improve your ability to give me political information and advice." At the senior level, and prodded by a political intelligence working group composed of the deputy director of central intelligence, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, and the deputy assistant to the president for national security, new priorities were set for political intelligence in 40 countries whose stability was judged directly to affect major American interests. The group recommended more resources to hire expert political analysts—not collectors—and decreed greater coordination in the collection of political intelligence between the Foreign Service and the intelligence community. The only tangible result achieved by the group, however, was a substantial expansion of reporting requirements that fell largely on clandestine collectors because the Foreign Service was not given the staff resources to respond. And there was virtually no change in the analytic methods and mid-level management by which intelligence analysis was produced and reviewed.

In part, these middle echelons have benefited from the general perception that U.S. policy and Jimmy Carter were at fault in Iran. Some critics of Carter administration policy suggest that the United States failed to follow through on its human rights policy. Had the administration followed through, they argue, America could have avoided both the hostility of Khomeini and the taking of the hostages. Other critics suggest that the error lay in failing to back the shah fully. While both views describe poles around which U.S. policymakers clustered in 1978 and 1979, neither explains why the intelligence agencies failed to detect a single clue to what was happening in Iran. The failure over Iran was deeply rooted in faulty intelligence collection and analysis and its causes have yet to be remedied.

The United States relied too heavily on its close working relationship with SAVAK, the Iranian intelligence service, for information about internal political developments, especially dissidents. The fact that Richard Helms, DCI from 1966 to 1973, was ambassador to Iran from 1973 to 1976 probably did not help to call into question this relationship or the validity of the information it produced. It is widely charged that the U.S. government agreed not

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to spy on the shah in return for his agreement to permit the intelligence community to operate two listening posts designed to acquire information on Soviet missile tests. Helms flatly denies this. Yet a key factor in the U.S. intelligence error was this reliance on SAVAK. And today the intelligence community still relies too much on such established relationships and practices for internal political reporting.

Moreover, intelligence analysts had little contact with actual conditions and political forces in the field. Then as now, the intelligence community had few analysts—as opposed to operations officers, who simply collect information—posted abroad. Analysts rarely seek such assignments because they seldom lead to promotions. Although the current administration has recognized this problem, measures to counteract it have been slow to take effect.

The analyst's life abroad is also complicated by the tendency of most operations officers to regard analysts as superfluous—or even dangerous—to collection missions. As a result, analysts stationed overseas can be as deskbound as they would be in Washington. Even short field trips are hard to come by. Contrary to the popular image of the intelligence officer who crisscrosses the globe in search of answers to policymakers' questions, American analysts are generally limited to one 6-week stretch of temporary duty (TDY) every 3 years or so.

Hence, an analyst's primary source of information is the "in" box, and analysts quickly become passive consumers of the reams of material generated by U.S. officials and machines abroad without asking what they really need to know and may not be getting. In 1978–1979, few of the analysts working on Iran had served there recently or had much TDY time on the ground; those who had this experience came back with tales of broad support for the shah everywhere they went—via contacts arranged by the isolated U.S. embassy. Thus part of America's blindness to events in Iran resulted from conducting analysis in a vacuum. And this tendency is still part of the intelligence community's bureaucratic culture today.

In addition, key assumptions were not sufficiently highlighted or, more important, challenged. In meeting after meeting, for example, riots and demonstrations against the shah were compared to the protests in 1963—the last time the shah had faced serious internal opposition—and were judged less severe. Participants in the meetings assumed that if the shah had squelched much more serious challenges in the past, he could and would do so again. This assumption should have been challenged, but the DCI could not get the community to focus on it systematically. The director's authority to demand such an examination was severely undercut by the tendency for each individual intelligence agency to feed its policymaking constituency with episodic current reporting and assessments.

Within the CIA especially, as the crisis worsened and opposition demonstrations gained momentum, the career senior- and mid-level management officials placed most of the emphasis on current intelligence. This response effectively relegated to secondary importance any review of basic assumptions or any discussion of a range of possible scenarios. According to the bureaucratic culture, such exercises are too academic during a crisis. As the crisis accelerated, the managers feared that if they provided anything but current intelligence reports they were likely to be blamed for any subsequent debacle. The result, noted the staff of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, was "an environment which lacked incentives for analysts to challenge conventional wisdom." The committee's January 1979 evaluation of U.S. intelligence performance in Iran explained:

> In the first place, analysts were not required to consider the possibility that popular opposition might undermine the Shah's rule. Such alternative hypotheses tend not to be addressed. Secondly, assessments which cut across the grain of current or proposed policy tend to be downplayed. Analysts' initiative tends to be clouded by the perception that such assessments would never be accepted. Whether because of deliberate suppression of such views by

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intelligence managers, or simply because arguing unconventional views is a time-consuming and unappreciated business, those who challenge conventional wisdom have little to look forward to in their intelligence careers.

Immediately after this finding, the report notes the appearance of "a favorable development" represented by monthly warning meetings held under the auspices of the national intelligence officer, "the purpose of which is to deliberately assess the *less* likely hypotheses and predictions." Such monthly meetings still take place, but their purpose is to summarize short-term trends rather than to imagine and discuss the unexpected or to examine key assumptions.

Moreover, the intelligence community does not study its failures. By nature the community is not reflective. Of the cases mentioned above only a handful have been the subjects of thorough postmortems. When such reviews are undertaken, their results are not widely disseminated or discussed even within the community. The findings of the Iran postmortem, which ran to more than 10,000 pages, were so embarrassing that no more than a dozen persons were permitted to see the report by the end of the Carter administration. None of those persons were young analysts who should have been taught what went wrong and why. No official postmortem was done on the discovery of the Soviet combat brigade in Cuba in 1979—an episode that was filled with lessons about the costs of the barriers the community has erected to protect the secrets about the information-gathering process.

Past failures, however, invariably concern subjects and problems—especially Soviet leadership and Third World instability—that still exist today. But because the intelligence community tends to avoid learning from its failures, the outlook for improved U.S. intelligence performance is still poor. As Bobby Inman stated in the 1983 volume *Improving Judgment in a Crisis* shortly after his resignation as deputy director of central intelligence, "If you worry that over the next fifteen years, there . . . will be many unstable governments, where a new Soviet leadership may see the potential for advancing its own interest by the actual use of its own forces, then we are poorly prepared to detect and to apprise policymakers."

This was precisely the state of affairs that Reagan wanted to change. During his 1980 presidential campaign Reagan pledged to make improved intelligence one of his top priorities. Once elected, he appointed his campaign manager, William Casey, as DCI. According to one White House staff member interviewed, Reagan took a deep interest in the CIA and during his first year in office spent more time than any president in history meeting with the DCI. Casey moved decisively and rapidly to bring on his own team to reorganize the analytic part of the CIA along geographic lines, to parallel the organization of the operations directorate, and to substantially increase the National Foreign Intelligence Program budget.

According to a January 16, 1983, *New York Times Magazine* report by Philip Taubman, the CIA is the fastest-growing major federal agency. Its 25 per cent budget increase in fiscal-year 1983 exceeded even the Pentagon budget's 18 per cent growth that year. Although the intelligence budget's size is classified, Taubman quotes congressional sources as pegging the cost of annual CIA operations at more than $1.5 billion. In his exhaustive 1983 study *The Puzzle Palace*, James Bamford reports that estimates of the supersecret NSA's budget run "as high as $10 billion."

Yet little improvement is apparent with respect to the accuracy of the intelligence community's product. Charges of intelligence failures have surfaced over estimates of the Soviet military build-up, the accuracy of arms control monitoring, the threat against the U.S. embassy and the marine barracks in Beirut, the viability of the Lebanese army, the nature and extent of the Cuban presence in Grenada, and the likely outcome of elections in El Salvador, as well as that country's domestic politics in general.

The DCI as Policymaker

Another major congressional and public

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concern has been the politicization of the position of the DCI in the Reagan administration. The appointment of Casey and his elevation to cabinet status have put the intelligence community deeply into the policymaking arena. In the atmosphere of an NSC meeting, the cabinet room, and the Oval Office itself, the DCI can be tempted, if not basically inclined, to take sides and to express a policy preference.

Yet the temptation is an important one to resist, especially for the president's sake. As the president's principal intelligence adviser, only the DCI can provide the NSC with assessments independent of policy preferences. Such intelligence can become a standard against which the president can evaluate the advice he is receiving from others. Policymaking is poorly served by intelligence when the DCI becomes an advocate and thus deprives the president of a compass.

Casey, however, is not the first DCI to be tempted by a policymaking role. Allen Dulles, DCI from 1953 to 1961, enjoyed unusual status and access to policy via his brother, then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. John McCone, DCI from 1961 to 1965, achieved such status and access with President John Kennedy. Yet both thought that it was unprofessional and unwise for the DCI—and by extension, the intelligence community—to seek a policy support role closely attuned to the tempo of policymaking deliberations. Allen Dulles made this point quite clearly in his now declassified congressional testimony on the National Security Act of 1947. Both Dulles and McCone consistently sought to distance themselves and their agency from policy decisions and meetings and thought that the DCI should not be considered a policymaker.[1]

During his tenure as DCI from 1976 to 1977, George Bush thought of himself essentially as the CIA's advocate with Congress, whose mission was to rebuild CIA morale while establishing a practical and legitimate oversight relationship with the legislative branch. He did not think of himself, however, as an expert on foreign-policy questions and did not promote a policy support role for the CIA. Stansfield Turner, DCI from 1977 to 1981, did consider himself to be an expert on foreign-policy and defense issues. He welcomed a policy support role for the agency, and privately briefed Carter on a weekly basis until 1979, and on a biweekly basis thereafter, on a mixture of traditional intelligence subjects, as well as on foreign-policy matters. These ranged from the status of new covert operations or problems in monitoring arms control treaties to Israeli perceptions of the Camp David accords and the impact of the administration's human rights and nuclear nonproliferation policies. But these briefings always stopped before they got to the material prepared on "policy implications." Despite access to policymaking meetings, Turner and his deputies resisted the temptation to speak up even when they personally thought, but had no intelligence information to prove, that a policy being adopted would not work.

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Casey, in contrast, has gone further than any DCI in history toward using his position to advocate policy and to make intelligence an adjunct of foreign policy. The trend today at the CIA and elsewhere in the intelligence community is to tailor the product to the needs and nuances of policy debate. As one senior intelligence officer said in an interview, "Casey comes back here from the White House looking for reports to buttress his stand. He does not ask us for a review of an issue or a situation. He wants material he can use to persuade his colleagues, justify controversial policy, or expand the Agency's involvement in covert action."

A case in point is Lebanon. Casey repeatedly returned drafts of one NIE for revision with

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[1] *See also Victoria S. Price,* The DCI's Role in Producing Strategic Intelligence Estimates *(Newport, R.I.: The Naval War College Center for Advanced Research, 1980).*

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the notation "try again." Many analysts think Casey was dissatisfied with the NIE's conclusion that the government of Lebanese President Amin Gemayel, and especially its army, were not viable and that they would not be significantly strengthened by a U.S. Marine presence. Charges that reports have been altered have also surfaced in connection with the CIA's work on Central and South America. Two senior analysts have resigned recently claiming that Casey ordered their findings to be rewritten to inflate the threat to U.S. security, and Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd (D.-West Virginia) has asked the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to conduct a thorough evaluation of their allegations. "If accurate," Byrd said in a letter to the committee's vice chairman, "these reports indicate there has been a shocking misuse of the CIA for political purposes."[2]

The search for reports and analyses to buttress policy and the blocking of critical analyses have been consistent and widespread criticisms of Casey's stewardship voiced by intelligence professionals. In addition, the Senate select committee has repeatedly expressed "concern" about whether as DCI Casey would keep the committee "fully and currently informed of all intelligence activities." These anxieties proved well-founded when it was revealed by the *New York Times* that the CIA had launched a covert action to mine the harbors of Nicaragua without adequately briefing the committee. Unfortunately, some of these problems are not new. Policymakers constantly seek intelligence to support their policies and frequently encourage the DCI to provide it. And intelligence officials have always tried to tell congressional oversight committees as little as possible, especially regarding covert operations.

Legislation introduced by Senator Daniel Moynihan (D.-New York) and cosponsored by Senator Barry Goldwater (R.-Arizona), both of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, would require future directors and deputy directors to be chosen from among career civilian or military intelligence officers; this is an important step toward establishing adequate qualifications for the office. The bill would disqualify Casey for a second term as DCI, but it may go too far in disqualifying able persons from outside the community's career services. In another respect, the bill should go further and establish the criteria to be applied to the DCI's chief deputies, who should also be confirmed by the Senate.

Nevertheless, neither the Moynihan-Goldwater bill, nor a new DCI, nor even a new president would be an intelligence cure-all. The intelligence community's major problems, which range from fragmentation in collection and reporting to politicization of analysis, are by-products of the way the community is organized and managed from within.

One fundamental problem is that the current reporting system discourages analysts and agencies from sharing information. Consequently, when collectors or analysts in one part of the community find new data that challenge conventional wisdom, their first instinct is to squirrel them away. And if the analyst is in doubt, his or her supervisor will usually suggest this course of action. In addition, intelligence officers often compartmentalize data collected by the sensitive methods of one agency and restrict dissemination to the rest of the community. This practice is rationalized by narrowly interpreting the "need-to-know" security guidelines. But the bottom line is that the bureaucratic culture underlying the American intelligence system does not now guarantee that all of what is collected is subject to community-wide, objective, and rigorous analysis.

At the junior- and mid-career levels, moreover, a promotion depends on an analyst's ability to contribute to the many classified intelligence publications prepared daily by the community for senior foreign-policy officials and to move obligingly from one assignment to another. As a result, analysts learn early in their careers to be wary of doing longer-range or in-depth studies. The task of writing such estimates and think-pieces, according to the culture, is to be avoided. In fact, these studies

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[2] *"Byrd Seeks Senate Probe of Charges of Report-Altering at CIA,"* Washington Post, *29 September 1984.*

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are largely turned out by members of a special staff, who have made their peace with the system and who do not expect or require further promotion. Most analytic promotions at the middle and senior levels require taking on management responsibilities—for example, to train junior analysts. Analysts and reviewers of analyses are thus inbred and tend mainly to develop only the skills essential to crank out current intelligence.

Replacing the CIA

The immediate need is for an overhaul of the analytic career service and production process that will correct patterns of thinking and of management that have contributed to past intelligence failures. A central, community-wide foreign-intelligence data base should be created to assure that an analyst working on a specific problem would have access to all the information collected. Analysts should also be provided with incentives to do more reflective writing and research. Work and travel abroad should be facilitated and a thorough, substantive review procedure for all products and publications should be developed. These steps would greatly improve the accuracy and quality of the intelligence product.

It should be standard community operating procedure, for example, to ask the author of every written assessment: What are your assumptions? Do they still stand? Analysts must also pay more attention to distinguishing between what they know and do not know, to identifying judgments based on specific evidence versus those based on speculation, and to making projections about the future. Analysts should give policymakers much more of an indication of what they should look for in the way of events or developments that can be used to test the judgments given in a particular estimate or assessment. By telling policymakers something more than the facts—what is known as "cable-gisting"—analysis should help to uncover the implications of the issue discussed for other problems, issues, and relationships.

Another key ingredient for improved performance is change in the nature and quality of the intelligence community's relationship with the U.S. academic community. Currently, more than 100 professors serve as consultants and read drafts of national intelligence estimates and other analyses. Yet the value of this form of "academic relations," as it is called, is low. Within the bureaucratic culture, attempts to reach out to academics are strongly resisted and dismissed as cosmetic. Scholars are perceived as being less informed and up-to-date than analysts. When an academic criticizes an assessment or estimate, the analyst typically reacts by producing new intelligence to support judgments reached. Supervisors generally rally to the sides of their subordinates and argue that incorporating the consultant's advice would make the final product less timely and relevant. As a result, conventional wisdom is all too often reinforced rather than examined.

What academics should therefore be encouraged to focus on are projections and assessments of the future environment in which U.S. intelligence services will operate, the challenges they will face, and the innovations that will be required. Government officials rarely do such thinking and planning effectively or expeditiously. And even when such work is ordered by the president or Congress the results are slow in coming. For nearly 5 years the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence "urged in vain that the intelligence community develop a multi-year plan for the systematic improvement of the Nation's intelligence capabilities," according to its 1982 report to Congress. Such a plan was only submitted with the fiscal-year 1983 budget. As part of the effort to cope with the challenges of the 1990s and beyond, the DCI should establish a steering committee composed of official and academic leaders to stimulate future research on an ongoing basis and to assure that the results are useful to managers and other operations personnel in the community.

Changes in analytic methods and management are likely to reduce the failure rate for American intelligence over the short term. But the inability of the community as a whole to centralize intelligence collection and analy-

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sis on areas where it has erred consistently suggests that much more fundamental changes are also required.

Reorganizing the way U.S. intelligence services collect, analyze, and disseminate the knowledge essential for national decision making should be a high priority for the new administration. In particular, a return to the concept of central intelligence collection and analysis would help improve the performance of both tasks. Such centralization, along with the separation of collectors from analysts, would break down agency-erected barriers to the badly needed sharing of all information.

Thus the United States should establish a central collection agency, able to command and mix human and technical intelligence collectors to use each most effectively. This mix should be determined without fear of how it will affect the power, status, or budget of various agencies. Also needed is a central agency for research and analysis where, again, the best talent can be deployed to work on a problem in as much depth as required. These two agencies should replace the CIA, the NSA, and the other intelligence organizations lodged throughout the federal bureaucracy.

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The current system, in which these various agencies' collection systems and analytic capabilities are all rapidly expanding, and in which the DCI has national responsibilities but no departmental authority beyond the CIA, works against such centralization. The result is an environment in which managers of the individual agencies withhold information from each other and eschew teamwork.

The putative discovery of the Soviet brigade in Cuba was a nearly disastrous example of how fragmented the intelligence community has become. Knowledge that a Soviet unit had remained in Cuba after the missile crisis had lain in intelligence files since at least the early 1970s. Had the intelligence community been well-organized enough to discern this quickly, a major U.S.-Soviet confrontation probably could have been avoided. The community's performance during this episode, however, epitomizes the tendency of each agency to expand its own collection and processing capability and to restrict dissemination of the product.

These tendencies will never be effectively suppressed as long as the separate intelligence agencies are rivals for resources and the attention of policymakers. As a result, the United States is further today from having truly centralized intelligence collection or analysis than it has been since Pearl Harbor.

Revolutions have rarely been predicted correctly, but U.S. intelligence agencies and their analyses failed even to come close.

By the late 1980s and 1990s the intelligence community will require both a substantial increase in human and technical intelligence collectors and even more effective interaction between them. The latter contravenes the bureaucratic culture, which currently encourages each collection branch to work as an exclusive entity. Centralization would give the DCI greater authority over the actual management and coordination of U.S. intelligence activities and would subject the intelligence community to a clear set of priorities for collection and analysis. Under this system, collection priorities would be set by a standing committee of the NSC, and the DCI would have the authority to determine which collection methods should be used. The NSC currently carries out this responsibility, but in a perfunctory manner. Because they have all left the current set of strongly entrenched agencies intact, none of the recent intelligence reorganizations under Carter and Reagan have accomplished much to force the NSC to focus on meaningful collection priorities. In practice, the agencies often are asked to relieve time pressures on busy policymakers by suggesting either what the priorities should be or

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what, if anything, should be changed from one year to the next. The current system of "staffing out" the identification of priorities thus tends to allow the collectors and not the consumers to drive the process.

It is also essential to increase the authority of the DCI over the intelligence community's entire budget. Under the current system the United States faces an incongruous situation. The DCI probably controls less than 15 per cent of the total intelligence budget and personnel. The budget is actually under the effective control of the military services, which own the bulk of the collection platforms the DCI uses. This puts the DCI in a weak position to command or control most of the intelligence community.

The principal risk of the degree of centralization proposed here is that the policymaker would have less chance to pick and choose from the different reports that now come from rival agencies. Yet this is a risk worth taking. Centralization would not reduce the amount of information available to the policymaker or render information-gathering and analysis too uniform. The policymaker still has many departmental sources and assessments, and much current reporting on which to draw—and which the intelligence community now duplicates. Nor must centralization mean the stifling of dissent. Under the current system, new data and insights rarely see the light of day anyway. In fact, what is called dissent today takes place only in the production of NIEs, about 60 of which are produced annually compared to the more than 2,000 formal assessments that the agencies provide policymakers each year. Further, NIE dissents are simply paragraphs prepared by agency representatives to highlight differences with the majority view. The trend and pressure in most other assessments, however, are toward finding an inter- or intra-agency consensus, especially because at budget time there are often sharp penalties imposed on an agency or unit known for either too much dissent or for changing its judgments.

What the proposed centralization does provide is assurance that the policymaker will get the best intelligence possible and the full range of differing judgments without regard to institutional rivalries. And when the best work that can be produced still leaves unanswered questions, the policymaker will at least be aware of the need to make a judgment rather than be tempted to choose sides in an interagency squabble.

There is much that the intelligence community can do on its own to improve performance. But chances are that these improvements will not be enough. In the past the intelligence community has been reorganized after every major failure. But none of these reorganizations has significantly changed the management system or improved the quality of analysis. The lack of centralized intelligence collection and analysis is the root of the problem. If not addressed now, further disasters which America cannot afford will be required to convince a president that he or she can expect better from the American system of intelligence and get it.

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